

Vermont State Hospital Policy		A25
VSH Visitors Policy – INTERIM		
Replaces version dated: 1/2009	Revised: X	Effective Date: 9/15/10
Interim Policy approved by the VSH Executive Director		Date: 9/15/2010

Policy Statement:

It is the policy of VSH to encourage patient visits where clinically appropriate. VSH recognizes that significant therapeutic benefit may be derived from supporting a patient's existing relationships with family and friends. VSH shall seek to realize this benefit in a manner consistent with maintaining safety and patient privacy.

Procedures: For specific guidelines regarding visits to the secure residential and treatment areas, see Visitors Procedure – Interim

I. Visiting Hours

Visiting hours on all units are daily from 3PM - 4PM and 6PM - 8PM. On Saturday, Sunday, and Holidays, visiting hours are from 10AM - 11AM, 1PM – 4PM and 6PM – 8PM. Exceptions to the visiting hours may be made by the Nursing Services Supervisor.

Visiting hours are designed to avoid conflict with therapeutic programming. However, VSH recognizes that family and other support system members are critical to the health and recovery of VSH patients. Therefore, every reasonable effort will be made to accommodate patient visitors. Visitors who wish to visit outside of regular visiting hours are encouraged to call in advance, whenever possible, to schedule a visit.

II. Notice to Visitors

VSH shall ensure that the following notice is posted at the entrances to the Hospital and at the entrances to all patient units:

TO ALL VSH VISITORS:

Information concerning patients receiving treatment at Vermont State Hospital is personal and highly confidential. Therefore, we request that you respect the privacy of the patients at the hospital by not sharing or revealing private information you observed or learned during your visit.

III. Disability Rights Vermont

Representatives of Disability Rights Vermont (DRVT) shall have access to patients in accordance with 42 CFR Part 51. DRVT is funded to provide legal representation and advocacy for persons with significant mental illness or emotional impairment as determined by a mental health professional.

- A. FACILITIES**- The law states that DRVT system shall have reasonable unaccompanied access to public and private facilities providing care and treatment for individuals with mental illness. The DRVT staff should be able to access all areas of the hospital, which are used by patients or are accessible to patients. When in a hospital, DRVT staff may inspect, view, and photograph those areas used or accessible to patients, and monitor hospital compliance with respect to the rights and safety of patients. DRVT staff are required to conduct their activities to minimize interference with hospital programs and to respect patient's privacy interests. The DRVT staff may have access to a hospital on request when: an incident is reported or a complaint is made to the DRVT; DRVT determines there is probable cause to believe an incident has or may occur; or DRVT determines there is or may be imminent danger or serious abuse or neglect of an individual. In addition, DRVT staff may have access for educational, outreach and monitoring purposes. If access is denied or delayed for any reason, DRVT must be provided with a written statement of the reason at the time of the denial. Access to patients may only be denied when there is a documented medical reason to deny access. In such a case an alternative time for contacting the patient must be identified.
- B. PATIENTS AND FACILITY STAFF** – DRVT is allowed reasonable unaccompanied access to patients during times that will include, at a minimum, normal working hours and visiting hours. Unaccompanied access to patients includes the ability to regularly meet and communicate privately with patients via telephone, mail, or in person. This access includes minors and patients with guardians. However, DRVT may not take formal action on behalf of a minor unless a parent or guardian has given consent. Consent from a parent or guardian is not necessary if DRVT determines that there is, or may be, imminent danger of serious abuse or neglect. This right of access includes access to patients at all times necessary when conducting an investigation into abuse or neglect as well as an opportunity to interview hospital staff.

IV. Access to the Medical Record

VSH may deny access to a patient's medical record if the chart is in use at the time. VSH shall offer individuals entitled to view the patient's medical records with reasonable alternative times when the patient's medical records may be reviewed.